

STATEMENT ON H.R. 1029

Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

H.R. 1029, the EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act of 2015.
Full Committee Markup

February 25, 2015

Thank you, Chairman Smith. Today we are also marking up the EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act of 2015. The only good thing to say about this bill is that it is less bad than the one before it.

This bill seeks to “reform” the Science Advisory Board by packing it with industry representatives and then tying it up with procedural burdens so unlimited that it is unlikely any SAB panel could ever render an opinion in a useful period of time.

I assume that is the point of this legislation. Endless delay means we never know what harm comes from any specific chemical or pollutant. And that manufactured doubt leads to an endless delay in the formulation of public health regulations. Unfortunately, that also means that the health and safety of our families and friends will be needlessly put at risk.

I would be remiss if I didn’t note that the origination of quite a bit of the language in this bill seems to have come from proposals put forward by groups like the American Petroleum Institute and the American Chemical Council. These are, of course, groups that represent polluting industries that would benefit greatly from the manufactured doubt and delays this bill would create. Based on what has been happening in Congress over the past several years, I can’t say it’s terribly surprising that the Majority is doing the bidding of the polluting industries, although it is sad.

There was a time, not too long ago, when the organizations upon whose recommendations we based our legislation were entities like the National Academies of Sciences or the American Association for the Advancement of Science. After all, this is the Science Committee. Unfortunately, over the past two years, this committee has turned a deaf ear to the scientific societies and associations. We’ve largely turned a deaf ear to the academic research community. And the Majority has certainly turned a deaf ear to the public interest community.

Apparently, the only people we now consult on legislation relating to the scientific process are the polluting industries who are actively and openly trying to subvert science for their own financial gain. That is deeply disappointing. As this committee moves forward, I hope we will get back to listening to the scientists when we legislate about science.

I strongly oppose this bill, and I yield back.